

## **Community Service**

Community service is work performed by an offender for the benefit of the community as a formal or informal sanction. Just as neighborhoods and communities are harmed by criminal and delinquent activities, they can be at least partially restored by meaningful service that contributes to their improvement. Community service offers one way an offender can be held accountable to repair some of the harm caused by his or her criminal actions.

Community service is effectively used in all 50 states and at the federal level as a component of criminal sentences and juvenile adjudications involving diversion, probation, and parole. Restorative justice practices in institutions are also beginning to incorporate community service sanctions for infractions that have a detrimental impact on the "community" of a prison or detention center.

### **Goals**

The goals of community service are to:

- Hold offenders accountable for the harm they have caused to the community.
- Provide communities with human resources that can improve the quality of life in public environments, business, and even individual residences.
- Help offenders develop new skills through supervised work activities.
- Allow victims a voice and occasionally some direct benefit by recommending the type of community service performed.

### **Implementation**

Successful community service programs require a true public-private partnership. Residents in a community can enhance efforts of the criminal and juvenile justice systems by providing meaningful work experiences, volunteering to supervise offenders sentenced to community service, and serving as mentors for adjudicated youth in community service capacities. Examples of community service include: public work programs that beautify a community's environment such as park and roadside clean-up efforts or graffiti removal. Truly restorative community service offers crime victims the opportunity to provide input into the types of community service they would like to see the offender perform, including activities that directly benefit the victim or a charity or project of the victim's choice. Community service can also benefit victim service organizations, for example, by providing bookkeeping services to a rape crisis center or other valuable support, as described in the example below.

### **Lessons Learned**

Adult and juvenile offenders, under the supervision of the Department of Community Corrections in Deschutes County, Oregon, have accomplished a number of human service and public works tasks, including the construction of a homeless shelter and domestic abuse crisis center. Offenders raised the money to pay for the building materials, as well as provided the construction labor. This type of community service provides offenders an opportunity for skill development and interaction with positive role models, as well as learning about the needs of others and helping to create something of lasting benefit to the community.

### **For More Information**

For more information, contact Dennis Maloney, Deschutes County Department of Community Justice, 1128 NW Harriman Avenue, Bend, OR 97701, 541-388-6673.

This *Restorative Justice Fact Sheet* is presented by a partnership among the Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, National Institute of Corrections, and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, all within the U.S. Department of Justice.